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C O N F I D E N T I A L HELSINKI 001486

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/ERA AND EUR/NB

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SUBJECT: FINLAND: NOVEMBER GAERC STRATEGY

REF: STATE 244333

Classified By: POLOFF DAVID ALLEN SCHLAEFER FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) Poloffs delivered reftel demarche to officials at the MFA and to Jonna Partanen, Special Advisor on EU Affairs to Prime Minister Vanhanen. On November 19, Poloff received feedback from Leena Aalto, Counselor in the MFA's EU Affairs Division. Aalto's remarks were keyed to the issues covered in reftel.

#### Middle-East Peace Process

12. (C) Aalto said that the top priority for Finland was securing strong EU support for a new electoral process aimed at electing a new generation of post-Arafat Palestinian leaders. She said that Arafat's death provided a "window of opportunity" in which to promote a substantive peace settlement in Palestine, and that the EU and U.S. needed to closely cooperate to take advantage of this opportunity. (Note: Aalto's remarks about the "window" were almost identical to those made by Foreign Minister Tuomioja on Nov. 8 during a meeting with EUR A/S Jones in Helsinki).

#### China Arms Embargo

13. (C) Aalto opined that she did not believe the EU would produce a statement suggesting to China that the arms embargo would be lifted in the near future. She said that certain EU countries would push hard for this, but that so many differences remained about how to revise the Code of Conduct and how to pursue the EU's human rights dialogue with Beijing, that it would be very difficult to draft any consensus statement. She said that the fact the discussion was back on the agenda for November was already a concession to EU members that wished to lift the embargo. Finland's official position would be that it was too early to produce such a statement.

#### Belarus

14. (C) Finland shares American concerns over Belarus, and agrees that U.S.-EU coordination is important. Finland will support whatever consensus emerges at the GAERC as regards possible measures against the Belarusian leadership.

#### Cyprus

15. (C) Aalto said that she understood Cyprus was no longer on the November GAERC agenda.

#### Turkey

16. (C) Finland supports Turkish EU accession and will try to build consensus for setting a concrete date for talks to begin. Aalto said that it was possible certain EU countries might support setting a date, but propose language suggesting that an arrangement short of full membership might still be a "positive" outcome to accession talks. Finland was opposed to this since it would send a negative signal to Turkey at the outset of negotiations. However, Aalto said that the question of timing (when the actual date is) was less important than the establishment of a concrete date itself. She said that Finland would prefer an early date, but would support whatever consensus emerged so long as it was "clear and concrete."

#### Iran

17. (C) Aalto also said that Finland was interested in the anticipated GAERC discussion about Iran's nuclear program. She said that both Tehran's positive response to the European proposal and Secretary Powell's comments about Iranian attempts to obscure efforts to produce a warhead and delivery vehicle would likely be discussed at the GAERC.

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